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JED AND HARLEY DOWN EAST
(Peaks Island, Maine)

by
Katherine Stewart
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By Katherine Stewart
Torrington Point
Peaks Island
Maine

Dedicated to
Island Lovers Everywhere

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JED AND HARLEY DOWN EAST

Let's listen in on Jed and Harley, two retired lobstermen, who, on pleasant summer mornings, "sit a spell" on a bench near the landings on Peaks Island exchanging gossip, reminiscing and chatting about this and that. Here they are!

HARLEY. "Mornin', Jed. Out early ain'tcha?"
JED. "Well, Liz is on one of her housecleanin' binges and there's no livin' with her, she's in such a tizzy. 'If you can't help, don't hinder', she says, 'so scat', so I scatted. Nasty-neat women may be the salt of the earth but sometimes there's a mite too much pepper in 'em for my blood. My mother was neat but not nasty, if you know what I mean and I guess you do. You're spliced and you had a mother,--or was you hauled up in a lobster pot?.."
HARLEY. "I'm spliced all right and sometimes I think Emma would like to see me sliced right down the middle, she gets so haired-up. 'Wipe your feet'; 'don't scuff the rug'; 'hang up the hand towel'; and sometimes even, 'don't speak out of turn', when she's in a real hoopla. Makes you wonder how in the devil we got ourselves into this holy state of matrimony, as the feller sez. Holy, all right, like a hole-y in the head."
JED. "I know but what would we have done without 'em?"
HARLEY. "I know what I'd have done. Prob'ly I'd have married another Emma. Jed, you just can't win!"
JED. "How you talk! You could've done worse. (Pause) Don't seem like summer's here again, time flies so. Summer folks comin' every day now. There's the Abenaki 'bout to dock and another lot of 'em will spew off."
HARLEY. "Spew is right and they'll look at us settin' here and they'll think, there's those two colorful old characters we saw last year and I'll be thinkin', there's those queer-lookin' characters back again this year. 'Course only some are queer-lookin'. Most are real nice appearin'."
JED. "Boy! You're right. There's lots of kinds of characters and we're not the queerest by a long shot."
HARLEY. "Remember that old boy in the funny shorts with the golf clubs last year? 'What, no course here? Ain't this Chebeague?' Must've got away from his keeper."
JED. "And that woman who asked which was the best hotel. 'Best!' I says, 'There's only two and they're both best.'"

HARLEY. "Well, she's docked and here they come, the summer influx, as the paper sez. Won't be long 'fore there's the outflux, summer's so short. You just get 'round to sheddin' your long johnnies when it's time to think 'bout gettin' 'em out of the mothballs again, seems like. Ought to be a law 'gainst short summers and long winters. There's laws 'bout everything else. (Pause) Wuzn't those big boats used to run here the beauties! The Pilgrim, the Auco-cisco, the Machigonne and them others and the ferry Swampscott. That's when we had a super influx but the automobile killed all that. Too bad, but that's progress, boy."

JED. "Don't seem so this island ever could've filled up twelve hotels in the summer, does it? People come from all over."

HARLEY. "I remember a college 'perfesser' that had a room at the Peaks Island House. He wuz so full of book knowledge he fair dazzled me but y'know, Jed, he didn't understand a cussed thing. Reg'lar thickhead. He'd need help to find himself on a dark night. (Pause) There wuz a couple come for some years to the Avenue House and the wife wuz the homeliest female I ever see. Every time they walked downstreet he wuz 'bout six steps behind her. Guess he couldn't stand to look at her ugly mug more'n he had to."

HARLEY. "When we had balloon 'cessions here, a long time ago, me and another feller went up once and the wind came up sudden-like and we went sailin' over to Cushin' Island and landed right on the fort. There wuz a war on and we had a bad time provin' we wuzn't spies landed there a purpose. They kept us overnight and asked all kinds of questions. Final they let us go and I heerd one of 'em say, 'Those guys are too stupid to be spies, 'special that one in the blue shirt.' Well, th'other feller had a red one so that left only me. I didn't mind bein' called stupid, though, long's it got me out of that mess."  

JED. "Sometimes our weaknesses pay off, don't they?"

HARLEY. "Now, Jed, you don't think I'm stupid, do ya?"

JED. "'Course not, but sometimes you pronounce words kind of funny and maybe they got the wrong impression. (Pause) There's a feller that's tried twice to cross the Atlantic in a balloon. Didn't get far. Says he'll try it again, though."

HARLEY. "There wuz another one started out in an 8-foot boat and he ain't never been heerd from. Why do people try these man-'gainst-the-sea tricks? Most times the sea's the winner and still they'll take those darn fool chances. Beats me!"

JED. "Don't make sense, does it? (Pause) Last night Liz was readin' the 'Island Gazette'. That was a handwritten paper put out 'bout a hundred years ago here. The writin' was pretty fancy, that shaded kind people used to do. It had some history in it and 'way back in the late 1700s there was only two houses and two log cabins here and one of the cabins was near here, where we're sittin'. It was built by Henry Parsons. For many years the people on all the islands had a big worry 'bout Indians. They didn't live on 'em but came in the
summer after fish and clams. They wasn't friendly then but you
wouldn't be friendly if people treated you like the white men did
them in those days. In the late 1800s friendly Indians came from
up in Maine in the summer and camped on the Welch Street hill and
made baskets to sell. Used to go to the hotel kitchens to get the
leftover food,—off the plates, I guess. Interestin' ain't it? In
1869 there was only 50 houses here. Now there's 'bout 800. That's
your history lesson for today. (Pause) Right 'bout now I'd like
to have one of Andy Englund's doughnuts. Remember how the first
thing lots of summer folks did was to go over to his bakery to
get 'em? Folks used to ask him if the tide was comin' or goin' and
he'd wet his finger and hold it up and tell 'em. They'd think it
was wonderful he could, just with that wet finger. They didn't
know he took a side-glance out to the tide-buoy over by Whitehead.
Pretty sneaky! He made eclairs for a while but he quit. Said
they sold too fast.

HARLEY. "He wuz quite a joker. Guess I'll be gettin' on home to
see what Emma's hatched up for lunch. Prob'ly nothin' but a
peanut butter sandwich. Ought to be a monument somewhere for who­
ever invented it."

JED. "I'll go along with you. Hope Liz will put a little jelly
on my peanut butter sandwich."

THE NEXT DAY

HARLEY. "Mornin', Jed. You full of ginger this mornin'?"

JED. "It's quite a while since I was full of ginger but I'm thank­
ful to be around. I'd hate to be like Alvin. Mary says he sits
all day and she knows darn well he could get around if he tried.
He's set so much he's lost his strength."

HARLEY. "That's right. Got to keep movin' a little. (Pause) Em
and me wuz talkin' 'bout this Bi-sentinel year,—200 years of ups
and downs, pros'prous ones, repressions, good presidents, bad ones,
and here we are still the best country in the world. Beats all,
don't it?"

JED. "Sure does. But that's 'depressions',—tho' in late years
we've had too many repressions."

HARLEY. "Reminds me. Did you read that some of those big boys
down to Washin' ton are talkin' 'bout changin' the Constitution?
Politics, politics and whoopdedo! Next thing they'll want to
change the Ten Commandments. You know all those commandants, Jed?"

JED. "Commandments, Harley. I think I do. 'Thou shalt not covet
thy neighbor's wife' is one. That means you shouldn't wish you
could have her 'stead of your own."

HARLEY. "Sometimes I wish someone would covet Emma, when she gets
on one of her rampages. 'Spose I could get someone to covet her?
He wouldn't for long!"

JED. "You don't mean that. Another one is 'Thou shalt not commit
adultery'."

HARLEY. "Godfrey, some of those food companies are breakin' that
one. We read every day 'bout some of 'em committing 'dult'ry on
food and drink. Seems like nothin's safe any more. Wonder we're
not all dead."

JED. "Adultery means havin' an extra marital affair, Harley."
HARLEY. "It does? I can't afford none of that. Emma sells that face goo and stuff to help support our own martial affair, everything's so 'spensive."

JED. "To hear you talk sometimes I guess your affair is martial. I said marital. Sometimes it's hard to tell one from the other, tho'."

(Pause) 'Thou shalt not bear false witness'. Know that one?"

HARLEY. "Faults witness! Emma's a witness to all my faults and lets me know 'bout 'em real often. Seems she don't have none, she thinks."

JED. "'Love thy neighbor'. That's another one."

HARLEY. "I have a few neighbors even their mothers would have to stretch a point to love. But I 'spose I should try. (Pause) I know there's a commandant 'bout stealin'. I wish those tax fellers down to Washin' ton would pay 'tention to that one. I do snitch a little from Em's pocketbook once in a while. She don't seem to notice but I never take much. Just 'nough for a pack of gum, maybe."

JED. "'Thou shalt not kill'."

HARLEY. "I wonder if that means mosquitoes."

JED. "'Thou shalt not have any graven images'."

HARLEY. "Fat Freddy looks like a graven image when he's settin' by the stove in the store. He's an image of too much blubber."

JED. "'Thou shalt keep the Sabbath' and not do any work that day."

HARLEY. "We don't do any work any days now. Old, that's what we are. My grandmother used to say, 'Life is short' and I didn't know what she meant. I do now."

JED. "You're only as old as you feel."

HARLEY. "'Prob'ly some young feller said that."

JED. "Cheer up, Harley, you don't look a day over seventy-eight."

HARLEY. "That's 'cause I'm only seventy-seven."

JED. "Here's another commandment. 'Honor thy father and mother'."

HARLEY. "I wish I had honored my folks when I wuz young. I thought I knew more'n they did. I had to grow up to find out they wuz two smart punkins. Had to live quite a while for that."

JED. "Harley, I know you've just been funnin' me. You know darn well what the commandments mean."

HARLEY. "Yeah, I do. I wuz just spoofin' you. Guess a feller wouldn't go wrong livin' by 'em."

JED. "I'd better get back to the ranch, as the feller says. See you tomorrow."

THE NEXT' DAY

JED. "'Mornin', Harley. Little 'smurry' this mornin' but she'll burn off pretty soon. Did you hear the City Council is comin' down to inspect us today? Once a year they do remember we're still anchored out here. Trouble is we don't remind 'em often enough. When we want somethin' we should hang together but people are afraid to get involved, seems like. Those fellers ain't a bad lot but they won't know what we want if we don't tell 'em."

HARLEY. "That's right. We need to speak up in this world and maybe we'd be spoken to, even if someone tells us to shut up. 'Twould make us feel better to get it off our chests."

JED. "Get what off our chests?"

HARLEY. "I don't know. Just whatever you said we should tell 'em."

- 4 -
What was it you wanted to tell somebody?

JED. "Forget it! (Pause, reading the morning paper) What do you think of UFOs? Believe there are such things? John Fred says he wishes one would come down on the island and we'd get famous."

HARLEY. "We'd get on TV and someone would write a book and maybe sell it to the movies. Wouldn't that be somethin'? (Pause) Notice how everyone and his brother writes books? Maybe we could write one. I think some of those people sez they've seen a UFO are full of the fruit of the loom or balloon juice, or they're a little empty in the attic."

JED. "Fruit of the vine, Harley."

HARLEY. "That's right. Fruit of the loom is on that new underwear Em just bought for me. I don't know why in thunder she got 'em with those fancy stripes and squiggles. Old fancypants me!"

JED. "She wants to keep you in style. (Pause) Did you hear that Paul Perry got married yesterday? And did you hear what happened? Just as the minister said, 'Do you take this woman?' Paul up and fainted. Flopped right down on the floor, he did."

HARLEY. "Prob'ly it came over him, sudden like, what a fool thing he wuz doin'. I s'pose they propped him up and went right on with the hookup. If he'd dropped dead I s'pose they'd have gone through with it just the same. Tie him up, dead or alive! When a female gets her flippers on you, you don't stand a chance."

JED. "How you do talk! That ring in your nose don't show much, Harley. (Pause) Liz and I get along pretty well long's I let her rule the roost and collect the eggs, the eggs bein' my Social Security."

HARLEY. (Reading the newspaper) "Don't seem to be much news and what there is ain't 'zactly apt to be upliftin'. Do you ever read the ads? Here's one in the 'Help Wanted',--Internal Auditor. Why would our internals need to be audited, whatever that is. Prob'ly they'd put folks through that newfangled computer thing."

JED. "An auditor is a guy that goes over a company's books to see if the bookkeeper knows how to keep the books."

HARLEY. Maybe sometimes to check up after the president has responded'away with all the money. That happens some, you know. (Pause) I always read Ann Landers. I'd like to write to her sometime. I don't know what I'd write about. Trouble is my English ain't very fancy. You always notice that, don't you, Jed? You know I quit school when I wuz fifteen to help my Pa lobsterin'. Kids don't know how lucky they are now'days. Some of those 'good old days' wuzn't all good, wuz they?"

JED. "I did get a year of High School. I don't know how my folks managed it, money bein' so scarce those days. My English ain't what you'd call purist. That means someone that don't smash up the language like you do."

HARLEY. "I'm lucky to have you to correct me. (Reading on) Here's an ad 'Antiques Wanted,--will pay $150 for round oak tables.' I 'member my father choppin' up some old furniture for kindlin' that would be worth plenty now."

JED. "We're antiques but I don't think anyone would give $2 for the both of us."

HARLEY. "Here's an ad 'Beat the heat, work in Alaska'. I saw some women on TV th'other day workin' on that pipeline up there. Why in Tophet do women want to work like that? 'Cause it's big money and money has evil roots, or somethin' like that. Women wuz meant
to be women and that's the way I like to see 'em. I wouldn't want Emma to hear that. She's a little jealous but I don't know why she should be jealous of a good-lookin' old walrus like me, do you, Jed? 'Course I ain't no Cassynova, whoever he wuz."

JED. "I think he was a great lover, had lots of girl friends."

HARLEY. "I never had much chance to have lots. Emma grabbed me when I wuz nineteen, just a pup. I've had to play the puppy dog ever since."

JED. "Now Harley, you make Emma out a she-devil. You know darn well you exaggerate."

HARLEY. "Well yes, guess I do. She has her good points. Give me a few minutes and I'll try to think of one."

JED. "She's a good cook, keeps a clean house."

HARLEY. "Yes, too clean. Her cookin' is good but when we wuz first married it wuz terrible awful. She made biscuits so hard I bored holes in 'em and hung 'em on our first Christmas tree. She said she put too much soda in 'em and, believe me, I had to put soda into me after every meal those days. She tried a lot of things then,--apple slump and it slumped, blueberry buckle and cherry grunt and every one made my heart burn. Godfrey, I suffered through a lot of awful messes. (Pause) Serious like, what do you think 'bout liberatin' women. Seems to me they've had it pretty good compared to us fellers that's had to work all these years to put bread and margarine on the table. 'Course I know keepin' house is work but women don't have the pressure, the wolf on their necks. Bein' their own bosses is worth a lot, ain't it?"

JED. "Well, keepin' house, some of 'em don't feel they're contributin' much but bringin' up good, law-abidin' kids is 'bout the best contributin' a woman could do. I remember how empty the house seemed when I came from school and my Ma wasn't there. She never went far away very often, though."

HARLEY. "The Lord made women to be women and ain't never goin' to be any way to change that. Notice what some of those females on TV hootin' and howlin' for liberation look like? Couldn't get a man, anyway, so it's those sour grapes. There must be lots of women that like to be what they are, soft and cuddly. They can get their way without bein' liberated."

JED. "There's lots of ways of improv'in' the world, if that's what they think they're doin', but down-gradin' men's not one of 'em, and that's what this rantin' and ravin' is doin'. Give women equal pay and forget the rest, I say."

HARLEY. "Why do women want to go into men's barrooms for one thing? Usual the talk ain't fit for their pretty little pink ears. Only some of those ears ain't too pretty, special those that would go to those places. If the talk has to be sweetened up the fellers can't relish their beer. Beer without off-color wise cracks don't taste the same. Takes the flavor out."

JED. "Think your mother did a good job with you, Harley?"

HARLEY. "Well, I ain't committed no crimes so far and I ain't about to start. When I wuz growin' up Father kept me so busy wuzn't time for mischief. Good for kids to have somethin' to do. (Pause) Speakin' 'bout ears, some people have funny ones, don't they? One thing 'bout Emma she does have good-lookin' ears. Trouble is she hears too much,--sez I snore terrible. She snores, too. I wish
she'd stay awake some night and hear herself. She'd be s'prised."
JED. "You could borrow Charlie's recorder and get a dose of her snore on tape."
HARLEY. "I could but she'd never b'lieve it. She'd say it wuz two other fellers. She's loud 'nough for two."
JED. "Well, guess we'd better call it enough for today and get on home and see what the neighbors might've brought in,--I hope. See you tommorrow."

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Here we are again, ready to settle the affairs of the world but mostly to set."
HARLEY. "That's one thing we're expert at,--settin'. (Pause) Tide's just right for swimmin' this mornin'. What do you think of those little scraps of nothin' the girls wear when they go in? Wouldn't our folks be shocked to see 'em showin' all that epicure! That's the fancy word for skin, you know. I like to use fancy words. I study 'em a lot to make up for bein' a dropout. (Pause) When we wuz growin' up a girl showed anything even six inches above her ankle wuz called a dollop, wuzn't she?"
JED. "You mean trollop and that's what a girl smoked a cigarette was called, too. Seems funny, with all the talk now, people are smokin' more'n ever. Reckless, I call it. I gave up twenty years ago. Liz says you might's well throw money into the parlor stove and I had to agree to that. I don't know why the parlor one; the kitchen's handler. Those old stoves gave a comfortin' heat. Nothin' like that old oven for toastin' your toes after a hard day haulin'. (Pause) Lobsterin's hard every day, even with those new haulers. I don't know how we did it by hand all those years. We must've been tough."
HARLEY. "We sure must've. (Pause) I 'member the day we took a young feller out, summer kid he wuz, and his Ma gave him a lunch and told my father to be sure he et it. A few miles out it got a little choppy and I never smelled bait more powerful than we had aboard that day. Jumpin' Juniper, it wuz ripe! That poor kid stood it pretty well 'til noon but I could see him turnin' paler and paler all mornin'. When Pa said it wuz time to eat his lunch he said he wuzn't hungry but Pa told him he'd promised his mother and he made him eat it. That kid turned two shades of green and he said afterwards he'd never eat another peanut butter on rye if he lived to be a hundred. 'Sides he never did like it on rye. My Pa wuz quite a dis'piliarian,--and he always bragged he kept his promises."

JED. "No matter how odoriferous bait got it never seemed bad to me. I guess you can get used to anything, ' specially somethin' that's goin' to bring those beautiful green crawlers known as Homarus Americus into your traps,--lobsters to you, Harley. Those critters are a mite expensive now compared to what we used to get. Why, when the price went up to 40¢ years ago I began readin' the stock market page. Thought I was goin' to get wealthy."
HARLEY. "Don't forget, though, hamburg wuz only 'bout 20¢ a pound and think what it is now. (Pause) Did you hear 'bout those two boys, teenagers, that hid their clothes in some bushes and went..."
skinnydrippin' th'other night? Well, when they came out their clothes had dis'peared. They dashed back into the water and stayed there scared to death. Couple girls came walkin' 'long the beach and the boys ducked under and almost drowned themselves. Good thing it wuzn't full moon. Lucky for them the tide wuz comin' and after while some big pieces of kelp came washin' in, so they draped it 'round themselves and marched down Island Avenue, big as life. Lucky, too, the police didn't see 'em. They could've been arrested for indecent composure. Guess they never did get their clothes back."

JED. "Exposure, Harley, exposure. Prob'ly there wasn't much composure, even with that kelp drapery."

HARLEY. (Reading the morning paper) Here's a little story 'bout Rudy Vallee. You 'member when he wuz here one summer."

JED. "Yeh. He hadn't had time to get famous. Had to go to Hollywood to get noticed."

HARLEY. "He called himself a vagabond lover. What's a vagabond?"

JED. "Well, it means a feller that wanders 'round sort of aimless, a kind of tramp, I guess."

HARLEY. "Vagabond lover sounds like a guy didn't stick with one girl very long. A heartbreaker, sort of. We've done pretty well stickin' with our girls, ain't we? Girls! Well, they wuz once."

JED. Yeah. Divorce was a disgrace in our time. Now it's the style. No stick-to-it-iveness now'days, that's the trouble."

HARLEY. My Emma's no Liz Taylor but looks ain't everything, -- but they sure help. Wouldn't want Em to hear me say that, but beauty is only skim deep, they sez."

JED. "Skin, Harley, skin."

HARLEY. "There wuz one time when things almost got real bad 'tween Emma and me. Her mother came from upcountry to visit. I swear that woman wuz a witch if ever there wuz one. If she'd stayed very long I don't know what would've happened. I knew she didn't like me but I didn't know how much 'til then. Imagine, Jed, a lovable guy like me! Thank goodness she cut her visit short when her sister wrote that the old girl's husband, Em's father, had been dressin' up in his go-to-meetin', or a funeral, clothes and spendin' quite a lot of time at the ice cream parlor, where there wuz a new girl on the fountain, a blond, the sister said, bleached and painted. Seemed he'd got a sudden likin' for strawberry soda. Prob'ly that's all it wuz but mama left in a hurry. That poor guy should've had a Purple Heart for livin' with her."

JED. "How 'bout an Oak Leaf Cluster, too? Guess I'd better be gettin' along. Got to stop at the store and pick up some of those high-priced groceries."

HARLEY. "I 'member when our grocery bill wuz 'bout $5 a week and we et good, too. When I wuz growin' up there wuz four in my fam'ly and if the grocery bill for the month got over $30 Pa almost blew a spark plug and Ma had to cut down the next month. Let's go, Jed."

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Mornin', Harley. It's a nice one, ain't it?"

HARLEY. "Sure is! Say, did you hear the President's comin' to visit Maine this week? Be nice if he'd come down here but 'course we know he won't. I wonder why anyone wants the job of runnin' the
country, or tryin' to. No one man could do it, special since that Watergate pickle-dillo."

JED. "How did you know that word,--which you didn't pronounce right? You got somewhere near it, though. Bein' President must be the most aggravatin' job in the world. It's a killer, too. Even my bein' president of the PTA years ago was one painful experience. Was for me, anyway. One year was two years too many."

HARLEY. "Tryin' to keep peace 'tween parents and teachers and stayin'neuter must be nerve-whackin'. (Pause) If I wuz to run for President my platform would be, 'What this country needs is a better loaf of store bread'. That stuff now is just pitiful,--a little flour blown up with a lot of air. It's a crime. Bet a feller that'd run on that would be 'lected. 'Course he'd prob'ly add a lot of fancy promises he'd know darn well he couldn't keep but they'd sound invitin'. (Pause) Say, you wuz president of that PTA for only one year so what did you mean, two?"

JED. "That was a joke. It seemed like two."

HARLEY. "Speakin' of jokes, did you ever hear the one 'bout the girl whose ma wanted her to marry a guy with a lot of dough? Know what she did? Married a baker. Get it? Dough, you know, bread dough like the mother wanted her to marry a guy with."

JED. "Thanks for explainin' it. I never would've got it."

HARLEY. "Here's another. What's black and white and read all over? Give up? It's the lottery numbers. See,--black and white in the newspapers and read by people that buy the tickets."

JED. "Wouldn't that be somethin' to win a lot of money! I'd buy me a new car. Might take a trip down to Boston. Whoopie!"

(The Island Romance docks)

HARLEY. "Guy named that must've had a love affair with islands. Godfrey, here they come. Some of 'em look like they might've come on a space ship. 'Member when folks dressed up real neat? Now some of 'em look like they wuz spawned in a ragbag that had been picked over real good 'fore they got to it. Look at that feller with his hair 'way down to his middle. He'd look sissy if he didn't have all those whiskers."

JED. "I'd hate to look into a mirror and see what some of these young folks see now'days."

HARLEY. "And their music! Do you like music, Jed? I mean real music, not that rock, acid rock and the like. It's acid alright. It's just noise and the louder the better for these kids. They're all goin' to end up deaf. There used to be some 'rock' in the old days that I liked,--'Rock of Ages'; 'Rock Me to Sleep, Mother, Rock Me to Sleep', and 'course there wuz 'Rockaby Baby'. You 'member those. Don't hear many good singers any more, neither, like Caruso, Nordica--she wuz from Maine--Galli-Curci and a lot of others. We had phonograph records of 'em. Most of the singers we hear on TV and radio now sound like they're 'sellin' fish'. (Pause) My father belonged to a quartet once but it quit when they found out Pa couldn't sing for beans. He wuz s'posed to be a tenor but every little while his voice would s'prise him and go down into the cellar when he meant it to go up. When the quartet got together again it had cut down to a trio,--John Fred, Al and Ray,--so Pa
sez, 'I'm not stupid. I can take a hint', and he up and quit. Told 'em right out, he did. That wuz funny. I wondered why he did when he'd already been dropped. Pride, I guess."

JED. "Speakin' of pride I heard Elmer's ma call him in to supper yesterday. 'Come in and eat your roast beef', she said. Roast beef! More likely salt cod. They think we don't know they're on welfare but they really need to be. Just the same they're ashamed of it. Too bad more people wouldn't be. Maybe there wouldn't be so many chiselers like we read about."

HARLEY. "Gettin' back to singin', when I wuz young the only thing I could sing wuz 'My Grandfather's Clock' and I could only squeak that out when I'd had a little too much hard cider or maybe some 'dandylion'wine. That reminds me, once my mother made a batch of that wine and buried it in the back yard to ripe up and she planted flowers over it. She knew Pa would sample it too soon and too often. Those flowers grew like 'all-get-out' and she found out why in the fall when she dug up the wine. Every last bottle had blown its top. Makes me think of that song, 'Days of Wine and Roses', only I guess what she planted wuz masturshimums or those unholy ones starts with a S, simias."

JED. "Your garden knowledge is pretty sparse, ain't it?"

HARLEY. "It sez here in this paper we should try to develop our potentials. I didn't know I had a potential. What does that mean?"

JED. "I think it means to work to be the person you ain't now but could be if you tried hard to develop your potential."

HARLEY. "That's clear as a pea soup fog in the mornin'. I think it means to exercise a lot and make your muscles strong. They have names and prob'ly one is named 'potential'. I wonder which one that would be. We built up our muscles plenty when we wuz haulin' out there by the Witch Rock and Jeffry's Ledge and you know the water's a mite deep there."

JED. "You developed some muscles in your head, too."

HARLEY. "Is that bad? I guess folks should exercise all their muscles and not let them get flabby, special that potential one."

JED. "Well, have it your way but I don't agree 'bout 'potential'."

(Pause) I was talkin' to Ed yesterday and he was tellin' 'bout that idea someone has of building a big place over to the Back Shore, a meetin' place, a theater, a marina and stuff. Heard much 'bout it?"

HARLEY. "Yes, I have. UN thing, I guess. What do you think 'bout the UN?"

JED. "It's costin' us a lot of money is one think I've got 'bout it and another is we ain't gettin' much for our money. Trouble with this country is we're too free with our cash. Notice I said 'our'. 'Tis ours but 'course you and me don't have enough to pay income tax now we're retired but we pay other taxes. Retired! We're just a couple of loafers or you might say bums!"

HARLEY. "We go from one thing to another, but bums make me think of some hoboes I see on TV lately. How would you like to live like that, ridin' the rails, eatin' out of tin cans?"

JED. "I'd rather live here and know where my next meal's comin' from. I like to eat too well."

HARLEY. "I'm gettin' hungry. Guess I'll mosey along. Reminds me, I wuz lucky, shot a coot. You know how to cook one?"

JED. "You sure was lucky! They're scarce this year. Yes, I know how.
You get it all ready, pluck it good, bein' sure to take off all the pin feathers. Wash it plenty in soda water, teaspoon to the quart. Lay some strips of salt pork over it and then get a good clean board and roast it on that, 'bout three hours. Keep bastin' it every fifteen minutes and when it's done real good, nice and brown, throw the cussed thing out and eat the board! Harley, a coot is the strongest tastin' member of the duck family on or off the Lord's green earth! Other names is mud-hen or crow-duck and those are enough to ruin its reputation, anyway.

HARLEY. "Board reminds me of Em's first cake with the cement frostin'. You've sort of taken away my hankerin' for roast coot. See you tomorrow."

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Mornin', Harley. Little late this mornin', ain't we?"
HARLEY. "A mite. I've been thinkin', Jed. We've been friends for a long time, ain't we? Friendship's a funny thing. Sometimes you think you have a friend and sudden-like he changes and your friend ain't your friend any more,--and it's a shock. You try to think what you've done to 'fend him and you can't. I'd ruther he'd tell me off or punch me in the nose. Least I'd know what's wrong. Happens with relatives, too. Sad, ain't it?"

JED. "'Friendship is a fragile flower'. I read that somewhere."
HARLEY. "Fragile! That means somethin' breaks easy, like eggs, don't it? Speakin' 'bout breaks, did you hear Brown's store wuz broke into last night? The only things missin' wuz a big box of frankforts, lots of rolls, a jar of mustard, one of relish and three tubes of toothpaste. Makin's of a big cookout and a big brush-in after, I guess. A brush-in's a good idea. If I'd ever known, or even 'respected', when I wuz young I'd live to be this old I'd have taken more care of myself, special my teeth."

JED. "That's the trouble! We never 'respected' like we could have. (Reading the morning paper) You been readin' 'bout all those senators and representatives gettin' those big salaries and then gettin' a raise and a lot of extras? Seems like the extras might be more than the salaries, too. I guess the crooked business wasn't all in the White House in late years."

HARLEY. "We ought to pay 'tention to who we vote for. I heard even a dead man's name wuz on the ballot and he got 'lected. Some of the people we 'lect act like they're sort of dyin' 'bove the ears, don't they? Ain't candidates a friendly lot when they're 'round lookin' for votes? After they're set down to Washin' ton or Augusta they're diff'rent. Like Heckle & Hyde, sort of."

JED. "Here's a story 'bout that feller out West that has thirteen wives. Can you imagine listenin' to 'em all at once maybe? When Liz's Wednesday Club gets together I have to get out of the house. Cluck, cluck, cluck just like a bunch of chickens after one worm."

HARLEY. "They're past the chicken stage, more like stewin' hens. Stewin'! Get it? Emma belongs to that and the Calendar Club. Once a year she has to do a paper for that one. Last time she wrote 'bout Mr. Longfeller. He wrote an awful lot of poetry, didn't he? 'Higher Water', 'The Wreck of the Hesperus', 'The Children's Hour'. I don't know how he got his kids to set still for an hour. I'd have liked to get mine to set still for five minutes. They wuz
always all over the place. One good thing 'bout kids, they do hafta sleep. Let's their folks get up steam 'nough to face 'em the next day,--they hope."

JED. "That boy of yours in the Navy did real well to get command of that ship. Frigate, ain't it?"

HARLEY. "Yeh. We call him the Admiral."

JED. "And your girl. She got married when she left here, didn't she?"

HARLEY. "A few times. She can't seem to stay put. Times has sure changed. No more of that 'til death parts us'. Ought to change that to 'til we get a divorce."

JED. "Too many get married too young. You was young when you got married, but you're still hitched. Why did you get married?"

HARLEY. "Well, I didn't have much 'won't' power in those days. My Ma wuz a good mother but quite bossy and children of bossy parents are apt to marry the same kind, seems like. I did, anyway. (Pause) Some couples get a divorce 'fore they're even married a year, hardly time to get tired of each other's bad habits. Y'know, in marriage there's two bears, bear and forbear. I've been doin' both for lo, these many years, as the feller sez."

JED. "You was a flower in love's garden picked too soon". In other words, you was not in full bloom. I read that in a poem once."

HARLEY. "That's right. I wuz just a bud, you might say. Do you like poetry, Jed?"

JED. "I like the kind I can understand but some now is just a mess of words. Reads like it came out of a cuckoo's nest."

HARLEY. "Right! I've got to get along home. Got to cut the grass. Wish someone would invent some midget grass."

JED. "I'm goin' to sit awhile. My rheumatiz is actin' up a little. My grass needs cuttin', too, but it will have to wait."

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Hi, Harley, you sonofagun. What a surprise when I got home yesterday! You cut my grass! I sure 'preciate it."

HARLEY. "Well, I sez to myself, my grass can wait. That poor old Jed is fallin' fast so I'll cut his grass and maybe it will slow up the fallin' a little. I know you'd return the favor when you're able. You would, wouldn't you? How 'bout today?"

JED. "I thought there was a catch somewhere."

HARLEY. "I'm just kiddin'. I took a little walk last night after supper, hopin' Em would cut ours and, sure 'nough, she did. She made a few choice remarks 'bout smarties but that wuz easier to take than cuttin' it."

JED. "Here's the Rebel and here they come,—number plates from all over, New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, Texas."

HARLEY. "I wish I could've traveled a little and seen some of those places but I couldn't afford it. Sure couldn't afford it now, neither. Money and me never did stay together too long. There wuz always somethin' to take it. Truth is I never had a lot of that beautiful stuff, anyway."

JED. "Ain't that the way with a lot of us. (Pause) Look at that bumper sticker,—'What this country needs is veracity, ain't it the truth!' And there's another,—'Honk if you like noise'. See that one,—'This car brakes for dinosaurs'."

HARLEY. The Rebel's loaded with cars and trucks every day now.
How did this world get 'round without cars!"

JED. "Why, folks got 'round in oxcarts, horse and buggy, trains, and Glory Be!, on their feet. That's what feet are for. (Pause) The first car I had was a Maxwell. I could get her up to thirty miles an hour and she shook, rattled and roared at that speed and I felt like I was flyin'. She sure could eat up oil and gas. Wouldn't be allowed on the road today, she was so pollutin'. Lot of cars was those days, black smoke and even sparks shootin' out the rear sometimes. We took a few trips down to Boston in her and if we made it in five hours we thought we was doin' pretty well. Two hours is 'bout right now. (Pause) The next one was a Ford. Liz and I took a trip to Florida in that in 1924. Jumpin' Jiminy Christmas, what a trip! Took thirteen days and the best day we had was 125 miles. We had flat tires, burned out brakes, you name it we had it and a lot more. We planned to camp so we took a tent along but it was November and cold. We never did use it 'til we got into Georgia and what a time we had gettin' the ornery thing up. In the middle of the night it started to rain and I says we'd have to take the dang thing down. If it got wet we'd never get it back into the bag. So we took it down and went and sat in the railroad station 'til daylight. That was the extent of our campin'."

HARLEY. "Where did you stay nights?"

JED. "There wasn't motels in those days so we stayed in cheap hotels and roomin' houses. We got into some lulus. One was an old military school, from the Revolution we was told. $1 a night and we should've been paid to stay there. What a crummy place!"

HARLEY. "And now you can fly down in a few hours. You, not me! I've never been up in a plane and I never want to be. I'm a coward but, as the feller sez, I'd rather be a live coward than a dead hero. 'Course goin' up don't make a hero of you but I'd call me one if I ever even got up my courage to go aloft."

JED. "But you went up in a balloon once."

HARLEY. "That's when I found out I didn't want to go up again."

JED. "You was on the water for years and water ain't the safest place in the world. You ain't consistent."

HARLEY. "If that means I don't jibe, you're right."

JED. "We've been lucky on the water. The only close call I had was that day I was haulin' off Ram Island and a Hoosier of a wave come aboard and swept me over. Well, I thought, this is it. I had my oilskin apron on and, my stars and garters, another Hoosier sloshed me back aboard. It happened so quick-like I'll never know how it did. Liz said I was white as chalk when I got home. I was glad it stormed the next day, Gave me time to get myself untangled."

HARLEY. "I see that Jones fam'ly is back this summer. Did you know 'bout all the trouble they had last year?"

JED. "I heard somethin'. You know the whole story?"

HARLEY. "Yeh, and it's quite a story. The first thing wuz, when they got to Portland they wuz 25th in line for the Rebel and it wuz hotter than 'Taylor's love' on the wharf. By the time they got aboard two of the kids wuz fightin' and one had given the other a bloody nose and she wuz drippin' all over the car, a new one. The other one spilled a bottle of pop in the mother's lap and got clobbered for that. When they landed the father zipped off too fast and broke the tailpipe. When they got to the cottage they found
the water hadn't been turned on. They got the feller that turns it on and when Mrs. Jones turned the faucet on it flew up and hit the ceilin', just missed her. They got it screwed back on and 'bout then the ceilin' began to dribble. A pipe in the bathroom had busted. Called the plumber and he had gone to Portland, so nothin' to do but wait. Temp'rature wuz 'bout 90 and everybody wuz thirsty. They wuz lucky to have the plumber come back on the next boat and he got the pipe fixed in a hurry, Great, they thought, now for some eats. There wuz a tank of gas left from the year before so they tried to cook some lunch and the gas ran out. Next they started to get beds ready and what did they find? Mice had got into the mattresses and moths had been chewin' on the blankets. The next incident, as the feller sez, the ten-year old boy got into a punt on the shore and pushed off headed for Europe. His pa tried to swim out to get him and both of 'em had to be rescued. Pop had clear forgot he couldn't swim. In the night a thunderstorm came up and hit a tree close by and knocked the 'lectricity out. There they wuz in the dark and the roof started to leak. Godfrey, if those wuzn't the hard luck folks. One darn thing after another! They stayed two weeks and the day they wuz to leave they came down to the ferry and there wuzn't none,—it wuz Wednesday. They must've been borned in the dark of the moon, or somethin'. Hope they have better luck this year."

JED. "They sure must like this island spite of that but islands get into folks' blood, seems like. (Pause) Ain't we the lazy ones sittin' here like this. Guess I'll be gettin' along. Comin', Harley?"

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Here we are again,'big as life and twice as handsome,'whatever that means. We ain't even once as handsome."

HARLEY. "Right! (Pause) Here she comes, the Island Adventure, loaded to the gills with more summer influx. Same mix of nice-dressed and the ragbaggers, I s'pose. It's a good thing we have the influx in Maine or we'd have to shut up shop. Taxes would be torrible. We'd all be on welfare,—if there wuz any to be on. We'd starve to death financial, I mean. (Pause) Are you stooperstitious, Jed? Do you b'lieve in this thing called ESP? Extra sensible reception, I think that means."

JED. "That's the worst one yet. You do carve up the English language. Yes, I do b'lieve there's somethin' in ESP. Ain't you thought of someone and the next day got a letter from that person or maybe a 'phone call?"

HARLEY. "Yeh. Yestiddy I thought 'bout payin' the 'phone bill and in the afternoon I got a call from the company sayin' they wuz goin' to cut me off if I didn't pay up. I'd clean forgot to pay that bill. (Pause) A telephone's a great thing, ain't it? Good thing that feller invented it. We'd be in a pretty pickle today if he didn't. Sometimes, though, when Emma gets on it talkin', talkin', talkin' and I'm waitin' for supper I do a little cussin' 'bout that feller Edison."

JED. "That wasn't Edison invented it. 'Twas Alexander Graham Bell."

HARLEY. "That's right! I remember Edison invented the talkin' machine. A telephone's a talkin' machine, too, ain't it? Kinda clever on that one, wuzn't I?"

- 14 -
JED. (Reading the newspaper) "Here's a story 'bout ghosts. I bet you b'lieve in 'em."

HARLEY. "Yes, I do. I've heerd there's one down in that old house on the point. It rattles chains and grunts and groans and lights flash! I wouldn't go near that place for a million dollars. Hey, what am I sayin'? I might go for $50. Wish someone would make me an offer. I might go for $25 even. I'd buy me some fancy clothes and step out a little, if Emma'd let me, that is."

JED. "You wouldn't get anything very fancy for $25. You might get some of those bell bottom pants and one of those tank tops and a fancy cap and--."

HARLEY. "Hey, Jed, slow up! I ain't got the $25 and I'm not apt to."

JED. "That's right, you ain't. I guess I got carried away."

HARLEY. "Speakin' 'bout 'vitymins', which we wuzn't, do you take 'em? My folks lived to over ninety without 'em. I wish Em wouldn't stuff 'em into me. 'Take your 'vitymins', she sez. 'A growin' boy needs 'vitymins'. She thinks she's funny. I ain't growin'. I'm shrinkin' like a prune. All wrinkled up."

JED. "Well, better take 'em if it makes our womenfolks happy."

HARLEY. "Emma tries to cover her wrinkles with that face goo and stuff she sells. Know what? Still looks 75, give or take a year."

JED. "You realize she's givin' you vitamins tryin' to help you feel good in your golden years, as some call 'em."

HARLEY. "Golden! The golden years is when you're young and full of pizzazz! Gold don't rust and we're gettin' pretty rusty. (Pause) One thing 'bout Emma and me, I don't try to run her life and I don't try to run mine. Kinda a double life, she has. I'm down in the engine room just takin' the bells, 'go ahead' and 'back up'. One good thing 'bout it, if anything goes wrong it's her fault."

JED. "Do you ever say somethin' if she does go wrong?"

HARLEY. "If you're smart you don't say nothin' to an Emma. Just keep quiet and saw wood, as the sayin' goes, I think. (Pause) There's lots of smart sayin's, ain't there? Like 'Waste not and want nothin'; 'Don't count your chickens 'til the hen has hatched 'em'; and that one, 'Seein' is b'lievin'. That means if you see it with your own eyes it might be so. 'Course you can't be sure of anything now'days. Times is changed since that wuz thought up."

JED. "That's funny. Here's somethin' in the paper that goes along with what you just said. 'Statistics can prove anything but this is my complaint; they make me think a thing is so, when I know darn well it ain't.' People used to think they had to b'lieve somethin' 'cause someone said it, 'specially if it came from Washin'ton. They was gullible but not now. Too bad everybody is so skeptical. Know that word, Harley?"

HARLEY. "It means you don't b'lieve nothin'. Fooled ya, didn't I?"

JED. "Yeh. Did you hear 'bout Henry White rentin' a boat to some people the other afternoon, late, and they went over to that little Sandpeep Island? When they didn't come back toward dark Hen went down to the beach to see 'bout 'em. There was the punt driftin' in to the beach and the people over on Sandpeep yellin' for help. Hen was so mad 'cause they'd not tied it when they went ashore that he put it on his outhaul and went home to bed. His fam'ly tried to get him to go over and rescue the idiots, as he called 'em, but he just turned over and went to sleep. Finally someone did go over to get 'em. Henry has no use for the way landlubbers handle boats."
HARLEY. "You know he can be pretty mean even when he's bein' nice. His boilin' point is what you might call low abnormal."

JED. "But it's funny, too, sometimes he's sissy. When that woman drowned off White Head he was scared silly he'd find the body and there was a $50 reward."

HARLEY. "We've set quite a spell. Better be gettin' home, hadn't we?"

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Here we are to do some more settin'. Y'know, Harley, we should be gettin' more exercise 'cordin' to those health experts."

HARLEY. "You're right, Jed. Everybody needs exercise but every time I think 'bout it, I just sit down and think 'bout it and get so tired thinkin' I give up the idea. Wears me out, it does."

JED. "I s'pose you heard Mrs. Fat Freddy is goin' to get a divorce. How she ever could've married old Fred, I don't know. He almost sixty, never been married and she a widow, forty or so, with three kids. Fred is a good soul but you know he'd never even earned a livin' for himself, let alone a fam'ly."

HARLEY. "Maybe she thought she could feed him a lot of Jerry-tall and he'd perk up. She wuz doin' that cleanin' and takin' in washin' to keep the wolf from the door. After she married Freddy it wuz like there wuz two wolves and a ky-oty scratchin' at the door mornin' and night. With the missus earnin' the vittles, he wuz takin' second and third helpin's and snackin' in between and gettin' fatter every day. Hadn't et so good in years. Poor Freddy, he could've took Jerry-tall 'til it came out his ears and he'd still just sit there. Must've been borned with those sittin'-britches on. Now he'll have to go back to beans, parsnip stew and slumgullion. Prob'ly 'twas that diet made him so rotundly obese in the first place."

JED. "There's a book been written 'bout what's happenin' to the English language. Too bad the feller wrote it couldn't hear your talk. Sometimes your language is what might be called unabridged."

HARLEY. "Remember when Freddy wuz worryin' 'bout losin' his hair? He wuz sheddin' fast."

JED. "Yeh. Someone told him to try mange cure, that's for dogs, you know, and he did. It smelled so, folks crossed the street when they saw him comin' and just waved hello. He said to me one day, everybody's in such a hurry now'days. No one has time to stop and talk even. I says, sometimes I wonder of we have a queer smell, like body odor. Thought he might get the message but he kept right on usin' that stuff 'til most of his hair had give up and he was bald. Guess there was somethin' wrong with his smell if he could live with that aroma. He couldn't have been usin' it when he was courtin' the widow."

HARLEY. "Speakin' of smells, we ought to raise a pig, meats so high. Brant's used to. Kept it right outside the kitchen window. That poor thing stood there up to his elbows in mud waitin' for the window to open and somebody toss out some garbage. Pretty handy, wuz'n't it? He always had a sad look like he knew his end wuz in sight. I don't know if I could stand that look, it would be so depressin'. I'd prob'ly keep the feller 'til he died of old age. Brant's house smelled pig to High Heaven! Even after it burned down I could still smell pig walkin' by."
"I was a call man then and I was the first one there after the alarm rang. John threw a big chest out a second-story window and then came runnin' out the front door with a feather bed. A bit mixed up, he was. Had his raccoon coat and derby hat on, too. He loved that coat, didn't he? Said he wanted to be buried in it and don't forget the derby. Minnie was playin' the piano and she finished the piece 'fore she came out. Don't know what it was but 'There's a Hot Time in the Old Town' would've fit. She was always a cool one, cool under fire, you might say. Her ma was, too. Had a pie in the oven almost done and she waited to take it out and come balancin' it out the front door. Blueberry, I guess it was."

"They wuz a great fam'ly, always glad to see you. Those wuz the days when folks had time to set down for a while and visit—and the whole island visited at Brant's. Sometimes people wuz torn down or maybe built up on the visits. 'Member when John Fred had a woman livin' with him for two weeks and his wife away? Curiosity almost killed a lot of cats then. John Fred let folks talk and when his wife came back he told us who she wuz. 'Twas his sister hadn't been here for years and we didn't recon'ize her. She wuz a pretty girl when she wuz growin' up here. Had a sad love affair and never married. Seems just as she wuz 'bout to get married the feller up and run off with Ray Brock's wife, you remember. What a shock! Ten years older than him and homelier than a dog fish. Must've had 'It' like that Clara Bow in the movies."

"Those old movies at the Gem Theater and the Pavilion in Greenwood Garden. Wasn't they somethin'! Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Fatty Arbuckle! Most had a happy endin' and no X-rated like now, never none of those! Why do people like to wallow in mud? That's what those X-rated are. In those old movies there was hardly any kissin' and if there was it wasn't like those sloppy ones on TV now."

"They almost turn your stomach. Could be full of germs, too. You 'member Pearl White in the 'Perils of Pauline'. She got into more tricky messes,--tied to a railroad track, hangin' from a bridge, adrift in a punt, but whatever mess she got into she wuz always rescued. (Pause) You know that time Gloria Swanson came here to do some scenes for a movie, I gave her a cigarette and she said, 'Thanks, honey, You're sweet'. Set me up for a whole week, it did. Never told Em. She noticed somethin' and she said, 'You've been star-gazin' lately. Tell mama all about it'. If I'd told her she'd have set me down in a hurry. (Pause) Sometimes a feller likes to daydream, don't he, Jed? Special when a lot of his future is behind him. I wuz 'bout fifty then and the sweet had just 'bout washed off, I thought—if I ever had any. 'Bout then I wuz findin' more'n a few gray hairs and they made me look extinguished, I hoped. Em wuz gettin' quite a few the same time and I thought she wuz goin' to have a breakup. She made that sage tea women used to color their hair with and daubed it on every day. Any woman did, though, got snickered at by the other women that didn't."

"I don't mind women colorin' their hair now 'days but sometimes it don't look quite natural; Too dark maybe but that old sage tea gave some women green hair, which wasn't real natural-lookin' either. You sayin' you was fifty reminds me. Did you ever hear this? 'At 20 I was sure I knew; at 30 I thought I knew; at 40 I
wondered if I really knew; and at 50 I knew how little I knew.'
HARLEY. "Ain't that the truth! There's an awful lot we don't know. Lot we don't want to know, too, and a lot we'd be better off if we don't know 'bout a lot of things we don't know 'bout."
JED. "Maybe so but I don't know what you're sayin'. Hey, Harley, We've set quite a spell this mornin'. Better be gettin' along home, hadn't we?"
HARLEY. I'll prance along with you. Horses prance 'til they can't any more and then they're put out to pasture, like you and me!"

THE NEXT DAY

HARLEY. "Mornin', Jed. I'm late this mornin'. I stopped in the store to get us these few cookies. You seen that sign there,--'If We Ain't Got It You Prob'ly Can Do Without It'? Lots of things we think we need we could do without, ain't there? Well, anyway, I met Ed there and he sez grumpy-like, 'what you doin' here?' I sez, quick-like, 'you got to be somewhere every minute'. He just give me a funny look and walked out. That's right, ain't it! If we ain't somewhere we just ain't nowhere. You're givin' me a funny look, too. I meant if you're nowhere you're dead. See! Get it?"
JED. "I get it. Which reminds me, do you have a will?"

HARLEY. "I do. I ain't got much to will but everyone should have one, they sez. Wills start off, 'Bein' of sound mind', don't they? How does that lawyer wrote mine know my mind is sound? I ain't been to no head doctor to find out. Those fellers are called 'psychiatricks'. One of those would know if he wuz of sound mind himself, wouldn't he? What if he found when he tested himself his mind wuz off the track!"

JED. "He'd prob'ly keep right on in business. Man has to make a livin' in his chosen profession!"

HARLEY. "He should've gone to a 'psychiatricks' himself 'fore he decided to be one. What if he found out then he wuz off the beam! If his heart wuz set on it I s'pose he prob'ly would go right ahead and get edjicated in his chose profession, as you call it. Edjication is funny,—fellers with college makin' less money than those with a trade. Don't need to know 'bout Caesar, Napoleon, King Tut, or any guys like that to learn how to do electric work or plumbin' or carpenter work or steel work or--."

JED. "That's enough! I get the idea. They're all work that's needed so those fellers can get high pay. Trouble is no one's ever satisfied so they strike for more and more,—money, side benefits, shorter hours and Lord knows what they'll be strikin' for next. Highwaymen, I call 'em."

HARLEY. "That feller Robbing Hood wuz a highwayman, wuzn't he? He robbed the rich and give it to the poor. The poor ain't doin' so bad now. They get lots of things for nothin' and some of 'em would rather be on relief than work 'cause it pays better'n a job. I wonder if Social Security and Blue Cross is taken out of relief checks. Seems so it should be."

JED. "Changin' the subject, what do you think of this idea of not eatin' meat? Vegetarian, you know. Those people eat vegetables, beans, nuts and stuff."

HARLEY. "I don't know 'bout that. I do like meat, 'special a good
steak but I can't afford that. Wonder if that new critter, beefalo, will be any cheaper. What am I sayin'? Nothin's ever cheaper! Hamburg, stew--stew, hamburger. That's the story of my life. Last time my son wuz here on vacation he sez, 'Pa, how'd you like a good steak?' I sez sure so he goes to town and brings down a big one,--right off a 'rhynoceros', I swear. My choppers bounced tryin' to chew it. He didn't eat any of it so he didn't find out. When he asked me I sez, 'It wuz fine, son, fine.' Biggest white lie I ever told in all my borned days.'

JED. "Here's a story in this morning paper 'bout dope,--more kids than ever usin' it. When we was growin' up we didn't know anything 'bout that stuff. And cigarettes! Why, my folks would've'skun me alive if I'd smoked 'fore I was almost grown up. I remember another kid and me makin' a cigarette out of dry leaves. Tasted awful,--just like dry leaves. Do you remember that story 'bout Ben and Ray gettin' hold of a couple of cigarettes when they was 'bout twelve and they went down to the end of Jones' wharf to smoke 'em? They set there with their legs hangin' over and started puffin'. Suddenly Ray turned green and his eyes crossed and plump!--over he went right down into the water. Ben didn't feel too good but he had to jump in to save him 'cause he was so sick he couldn't swim. Ben towed him over to the beach and a couple fellers rolled him over a barrel, he'd shipped so much water, and then they took him home weak as a dish mop. His Ma never knew 'bout those cigarettes.'

HARLEY. "I'd forgot that but now I remember. Ray wuz out of school for two days and when he went back his Ma sent a note,--'Ray wuz absent 'cause some heartless boy pushed him overboard. He owes his life to his heroic friend Ben. I wish you would read this to the class.' Some of us kids knew what pushed him over and we had a hard time to keep from snickerin', didn't we?"

JED. "Right! Guess I'll be goin' along home. I feel like a second breakfast. How 'bout you, Harley?"

THE NEXT DAY

HARLEY. "Mornin', Jed. I'm late. Em wuzn't feelin' good last night so I set the bread. Had to bake it off this mornin'. I heerd a girl say once she liked to set the bread for her mother 'cause it got her hands clean. I'd hate to eat the bread. 'Course it does do somethin' to your hands so prob'y that's what she meant."

JED. (Reading the morning paper) "Here's a story 'bout some fellers huntin' out of season. Guess there's lots of that if we knew the truth of it. I used to go huntin', in season of course, but I ain't been for a long time. I had a bad experience once and it cured me. I was fellerin' a bear, I don't know why 'cause bear meat ain't to my likin'. After while it come near its den and just as it started in there was a shot from somewhere and the bear dropped. Dead, she was. Her three young ones come out of the den and snuggles up to her, kissin' her and whinin'. That scene was too much for me and I tell you I even shed a few tears. I was young, you know. I never went huntin' again."

HARLEY. "'Member Seth Clark went huntin' faithful every fall and always brought home a deer. We knew darn well he couldn't hit a barn door, even a double one, he wuz so dodderin'. Everyone said he bought the critters but 'course we couldn't prove it."
JED. "If a man needs to kill for meat for his fam'ly, all right, but 'sport', no."

HARLEY. "Why ain't those animals got as much right to be here as we have? (Pause) Say, Jed, maybe lobsters has a right to be out there in the ocean without somebody catchin' 'em. Hadn't thought of that. Glad I didn't when I wuz lobsterin' or I might've cried every time I took one out of a trap. (Pause) You like animal programs on TV?"

JED. "Yeh. I don't watch too much TV, though. I like the ball games and the news and a few others but some stuff is an insult to our intelligence."

HARLEY. "Intelligence! That's what's in our heads. They test kids for that now. IQ, that's what it's called. We never had that in school. If a kid passes the test good he's marked Q for quick and if he ain't quick he's marked S for slow,--I think. I'd have got an S 'cause I wuz a little slow readin' but I didn't know any kids that couldn't read. I wuz slow on the long words but I could sound 'em out. Trouble wuz I didn't know what some of 'em meant. Still don't. Words is funny. Sometimes they don't mean what they sound like 'cause they sound like other words that mean somethin' else."

JED. "Maybe you're right, Harley, if you said what I think you said but I guess I don't know what you said. Forget it!"

HARLEY. "I don't even understand what I said myself so we'd both better forget it. (Reading the morning paper) You know, Jed, we're livin' in scary times with this 'nookler'age. Sometime when we ain't lookin' we could all be blown up. 'Course it would never happen but wouldn't it be somethin' if just you and me wuz left, maybe settin' right here. Be like Adam and Eve sort of but we bein' of the same gender we couldn't raise a fam'ly like they did. When we died it would be the end of everything."

JED. "You do have the pipe dreams. Looks like we've got to take a chance on nuclear power or be beholdin' to those Arabs forever."

HARLEY. "Those Ayrabs are gettin' awful rich, buyin' up things in this country like hotels, businesses and an island somewhere! S'pose they'd be interested in buyin' this one? Wouldn't that be somethin'? We'd prob'ly be walkin' 'round in those flowin' kimonas and ridin' on camels!"

JED. "Sometimes I wonder how you think up some of your wild talk."

HARLEY. "And sometimes I wonder why you can't take a joke. I've heerd English people can't. Was your folks 'way back English?"

JED. "They come over on the Mayflower."

HARLEY. "Mine did, too, but I kinder keep that under my cap. Some of 'em wuz high-class and some wuzn't and I don't know if mine wuz the wuz or the wuzn't."

JED. "That must've been an awful trip. Took months. People must have been tough then. I guess some died and prob'ly some wished they would 'fore they was half way over."

HARLEY. "The air in the cabin must've got thick 'nough to cut with a knife and 'course there wuzn't no air-condition' then. Too bad those deod'rants hadn't been invented 'fore they left. There's lots of 'em now. See 'em all the time on TV,--'Left Guard', 'I've Got a Secret'."

JED. "We used to read 'bout 'sweat of the brow' and 'work up a sweat' but now'days sweat is caught up 'fore it even gets started."

- 20 -
Maybe that's what this country needs, more good oldfashioned sweat."
HARLEY. "Might make a good ad for those companies that make the
de'odrants. Might double their profits if they encouraged people
to work harder and get up a sweat."
JED. "By sweat I mean give a day's work for a day's pay."
HARLEY. Sweat is an oldfashioned word. Pers'pration is the high-toned word for it now."
JED. "Used to be a man worked nine, ten hours a day and thought
nothin' of it. Now the unions don't allow that. The worst union
thing is the teachers' strikes. I shouldn't think kids would have
any respect for 'em. Unsettlin', I'd think. Imagine what people
would've thought years ago if teachers had struck."
HARLEY. "They did strike sometimes. Me, for one! More'n once,
too, but I deserved it. Mary Ellen sat in front of me and one time
I stuck her braids in the inkwell. 'Nother time I shook a couple
big mussels and put 'em down the back of her neck. Got struck good
and proper for that. I should've paid more 'tention in school.
Kids don't know how important school is but you can't put old heads
on young necks, or somethin' like that."
JED. "'Live and learn' but sometimes we learn too late. Too late!
That has a sad sound, don't it?"
HARLEY. "There's happy words and sad ones. Some happy ones for me
is, 'It's gettin' long to eatin' time so I guess I'll be off and
runnin'. See you tomorrow."

THE NEXT DAY
HARLEY. "Mornin', Jed. Here's the Abenaki! Looks like a big influx
today. (Pause) She's a good boat but a boat's only as good as her
skipper, I always sez."
JED. "There's talk 'bout needin' radar with all the tankers comin'
and goin'. (Pause) In the old days we had some fine captains,
born navigators, they was. We did some fancy navigatin' in our time,
most of it by the seat of our oilskins, you might say. I had an
old 1-cylinder Knox engine, second-hand, in one of my boats. Just
think of goin' five or six miles out with an old junker like that.
She made it, though, for two years. Guess the Lord was with me.
Did you see young Danny Smith's new lobster boat? Reg'lar floatin'
palace! Great big cabin, bunks, heat. Luxury compared to those old
20-footers with a canvas hood like we went in. Wonder we didn't
freeze to death in the winter. (Pause) We didn't exactly choose
our life-style, did we? Sort of come to us but it ain't been too
bad. Salt water in our veins, I guess, 'stead of blood. Prob'ly I'd
choose it again. Would you, Harley?"
HARLEY. "My Pa sort of chose mine for me. It hasn't had much style
but I'd probably choose it again. The sea can be awful cruel but
it's fas'natin', too. Fas'natin' to see what wuz in those traps.
Gamblers all the way, that's what we wuz. My edjication bein' cut
short, I didn't do too bad. Made a fair decent livin', raised two
kids. We're gettin' 'long all right now. We've got 'nough money
to last the rest of our lives if we don't buy anything. That's a
joke I read. We could probably get 'long if Emma didn't sell those
beauty things but she likes to get 'round and get the gossip and it
does put a little frostin' on the cake, she sez."
JED. "Did Em tell you 'bout that meetin' she and Liz went to last night on astrology? That's the belief the stars and planets can run your life, you know."

HARLEY. "She did. But I don't want no stars runnin' my life. Em's doin' that and she wouldn't want any int'reference."

JED. "If you was born under certain stars and planets your life style would be all picked out for you."

HARLEY. "Emma could change that. I've read those astoral people say somethin' like, if Jupiter wuz in the 6th house and Venus wuz there, too, you'd better do somethin' or other that day, or maybe you'd better not. Sounds like there might be a scandal brewin' with those two bein' there alone all day. Might be married, though. If I'm in my house and Em's there talkin' too much, and the weather's good, I come down here and set and kill time talkin'."

JED. "We sure do kill a lot of time. (Pause) Speakin' 'bout weather, most of the time I can tell better'n those weather bureau fellers what it will be. They have a parcel of instruments and all I have is my head and my rheumatiz and those old sayin's,--'Red in the mornin', sailors take warnin'; Red at night sailors' delight'! I miss once in a while. I mind the time I told some summer folks the day would be salubrious for a trip down the Bay. Like that word 'salubrious', Harley? They went and got soaked and almost drowned in the worst downpour I ever did see. And wind! Almost had to tie your hair on! I wore dark glasses and pulled my hat down and walked on th'othe side of the street the rest of the time they was here. I guess my head was off its trolley that time."

HARLEY. "Trolley makes me think of those old street cars on Congress Street that went from one end of town to the other and out to Old Orchard, Riverton, Cape Cottage and a few other places. There wuz one fancy car called The Bramhall,--carpet, wicker chairs and even a bar, I heard. Cost as much as $25 to hire it, I guess. I heerd some big boys, bank presidents and such, used to hire it and have a ringding of a drunk somewhere out of town. Then the next day they'd be struttin' 'round town talkin' pro'bition. The world is full of'hypercriteg, ain't it! (Pause) I used to go to Old Orchard once every summer on the trolleys. We had 'musement stands and things here but that place had more. Too'x hours to see all of it. I used to play some of the games but I never won much. Sometimes I'd spend almost $3 and maybe win a $1 teddy bear or a 50¢ cane. I used to be quite a 'spenddrift'when I wuz a 'whippersnap'. I used to dress pretty well, too. Even had a zoot suit. Rooty-tootS You 'member those,--fitted coat, baggy pants. They wuz pretty awful."

JED. "They sure was! With all your high steppin' you never drank much, did you?"

HARLEY. "I always kept away from the hard likker. I don't want to take anything that would affect my facilities. I want to be in command of 'em all the time. I don't want 'em in command of me, ever."

JED. "Faculties is the word, my boy, but I know what you mean. A guy can make an awful fool of himself under the infulence. I mean influence. Guess I'm catchin' somethin' from you."

HARLEY. "Better call it a day and get on home. See you tomorrow."

JED. Yeh. Tomorrow's another day and another dollar, as the sayin' goes. The dollar's only worth 'bout 50 cents now they tell us and the way it looks it will be down to 25¢ 'fore long."
THE NEXT DAY

HARLEY. "Here we are bright-eyed and busy-tailed. Sounds like we're gossips, don't it?"

JED. "That ain't busy-tailed. It's bushy-tailed, like a squirrel. Makes me think, we're lucky we don't have 'em on the island. They could do a lot of damage with so many summer cottages here. I've heard there are some deer out back."

HARLEY. ''Member seef' one that swum over from Cape Elizabeth once. (Pause) You 'member when we had the Peaks Island to Portland swim years ago. Y'know, I never wuz a good swimmer. I could just barely keep myself afloat and there I wuz goin' out on the water all those years. Risky, wuzn't it? Maybe knowin' I couldn't swim too good made me more careful. I always said a little prayer when I went aboard in the mornin'. Bible sez the Lord walks the waves."

JED. "Good ideal. (Reading the morning paper) Well, I swan! Here's a story of some people in a boat cookin' in the galley and the cookin' guy got burned 'cause another boat come by makin' waves and the cookin' spilled over onto him. Now he's sued the guy that made the waves and the jury says he should get $20,000."

HARLEY. "'Course you should slow up passin' but that's the most ridiculous suit I ever heerd of. Anyone cookin' in a boat takes a chance. A whale or a porpoise or that 'Locked Mess monster could come up under a boat. I think that guy was an opportunist, wouldn't you say?"

JED. "I wouldn't but you did and I know what you mean."

HARLEY. "I've heerd you and Liz talk 'bout your second honeymoon but I never did hear the whole story. Now that we have so much time to spare I'd like to hear it."

JED. "It's a long story but if you want to hear the details, here goes. It was like this. Liz had been thinkin' for weeks 'bout how she'd like to take a trip 'fore I set my pots that spring,--it's some years ago now,--but she wondered how I'd take to the idea. At last she got spunk enough to bring up the subject, after she 'buttered' me up with my favorite supper, fried clams and apple dumplin'. 'Jed', she says, 'we haven't been anywhere for years 'cept to Portland now and then,--how'd you like to go down to Boston for a second honeymoon?' That's where we went on the first one. I looked up, sudden-like, as though she'd said, 'How'd you like to take a trip to Mars?' 'Why, Liz,', I says, 'That would take a sight of money and you know I have that bill for laths and nails comin' up.' 'Well,' she says, 'I've still got that chowder money from last summer'. She'd sold home-made chowder to the summer folks (the influx you talk 'bout) and she'd saved every cent, seventy-five dollars. She says, 'The car's not gettin' any newer and we're not gettin' any younger, so it may be now or never.' I says, 'That idea takes a bit of thinkin' but if I think too much I'll say 'nd, so let's do it.' She was so s'prised her ears popped. Couple days later we shoved off 'bout 9 A.M. and the first upset was a flat tire on Commercial Street. A half hour of heavin' and haulin' and we got it fixed and off we went and hit the Turnpike right on the nose. I says, 'We're goin' seventy and everybody's flyin' by us. Seventy don't mean a thing.' Seventy was legal then."

HARLEY. "No, it don't, and they're still goin' seventy even with
the fifty-five limit. Makes you discouraged sometimes 'bout the human races, don't it?"

JED. "That's right, it does. Well, things went along smooth 'til we came to a queer place in the road we found out later was called a 'clover leaf'. I says, 'It's a new one on me but here goes.' We went 'round a couple of times and landed right back where we'd started. I scratched my head and said I'd give it another whirl and that time we landed out on a straight road and stuck with it for 'bout five miles. We came to a sign that said 'Kittery', 10 miles.' 'Kittery', Liz says, 'We went through there a half hour ago!' Nothin' to do but go back and give that whirligig another whirl. 'This time', I says, 'I'll be smart and feller a car real close. If other people can get off the consarned thing, we can.' That's what we did, fellered as close as the law allowed and got off real good,—we thought. The next sign says, 'Lawrence, 15 miles'. Liz says, 'That ain't right. Let's stop and ask someone'. At a gas station an old man came out and when Liz says, 'Will this road take us to Boston?', he says 'The road won't but your car will if you feller that road over there. Heel! Heel! Real joker, he was. Off we went and at last we was headed right and when we got near Boston we saw a sign, 'To the Tunnel'. I says to Liz, 'I don't remember we had to go through a tunnel before. Must be somethin new', so down into the tunnel we went. We didn't like it much but we had to grin and bear it. When we got out we found we was in South Boston, so nothin' to do but go back into that scary thing. When we come out we did manage to find Washin' ton Street. We found a garage and then headed for the Parker House where we'd stayed on our first honeymoon. We got set in our room and then went lookin' for a restaurant, 'cause we didn't think our budget could stand hotel dinin'-room prices. We walked 'til we found one that had a sign in the window, 'Pleasin' Prices' and I ordered fried clams. Liz exploded 'cause I could get those for the diggin' back home, she says. When we was in Boston before we went to a burlesque show at the Old Howard but we didn't tell the folks back home. Found the place wasn't there now so we settled for some window-shoppin' and then back to the hotel, real tuckered out."

HARLEY. "I went to the Old Howard once. It wuz s'posed to be real risky, risque, or whatever that word is. It wuz pretty tame compared to some things we see on TV now."

JED. "That's right! The next mornin' we took a walk on the Common and the rabblerousers was still rabblin'. A fast talker stopped us to offer chances on that 'big buildin'over there'. Know what is was? The State House! I says, 'Son, we're green and we ain't ready to be picked yet.' Besides, we'd heard 'bout people buyin' Brooklyn Bridge. After lunch we went down to Filene's basement. Such bargains and we without much money! On our first honeymoon we'd climbed Bunker Hill Monument and we wondered if we could do it again, so out to Charlestown. Harley, you wouldn't believe how that monument had grown, so we settled for a walk 'round it. Back to the city and a look at Faneuil Hall. That looked just the same, still the Cradle of Liberty. Liz and I are flag-wavers and proud of it. (Pause) You fallin' asleep, Harley?"

HARLEY. "No, no! The sun in my eyes made 'em close a little. Go on. It's inter'restin'!"

JED. "Well, when we was small we loved trains, so I says to Liz,
''Let's go down to South Station and look at the passenger trains.' We sat in the station for a while and did some people-watchin'. Some of 'em was pretty weird lookin'. Maybe they thought we was but we had on our best bib-and-tuckers. Next we walked 'long the waterfront to North Station,—more trains and more queer-lookin' people. I says, 'Liz, how 'bout supper here and then see wrestlin' at the Garden?' Those lady wrestlers! Liz says, 'They're what you might call manly women. That might be all right for them but I like bein' what I am, a female woman.' When we came out of the Garden a dirty-lookin' character asked us for a quarter for a cup of coffee. I says, quick-like, 'I'll buy you one at that lunchroom over there. It's only ten cents!'. The feller says, 'Thanks, boss, but that place ain't very clean.' And off he staggered. The third day we took a bus tour out to Concord and Lexington and stood on Concord Bridge, like we did before. We was bein' real careful with our money but it was evaporatin' so we had a last fling that night at a tony restaurant and Liz warned,—no clams. The next day we headed for home and when we came to that clover leaf we 'proceeded with caution' and, hurrah for us, we made it the first time. We got home with just five dollars left. We said the trip was somethin' to remember but we agreed that 'Home is Best', 'specially when home is down here in Maine. Agree to that, Harley?" 

HARLEY. "Sure do! We've been here a long time this mornin'. I guess I'd better be headin' home. Got to earn my supper cuttin' up some wood for the fireplace. Wish Emma would take some karate lessons and learn to split wood with her fist. See you tomorrow."

THE NEXT DAY

HARLEY. "Mornin', Jed. Where you been and what's wrong with your finger, all done up like that?"

JED. "I stopped at Ben's and his dog nipped me."

HARLEY. "Shouldn't keep a nipper like that. Did you ever hear the sayin' 'nippin' dogs and cacklin' hens always come to bad endings?"

JED. "You got somewhere near it. (Reading the newspaper) There was a little accident at a busy street corner, bus bumped a truck. There was five people on the bus and twenty-eight of 'em went to the hospital. Like magic, wasn't it? Here's another. Man rescued a woman from her burnin' house and then sued her 'cause he hurt his back doin' it. From hero to bum, he was. There's lots of crooks in this world but, thank the Lord, they're in the minority."

HARLEY. "If they wuzn't this world would be a turrible place. As 'tis 'tain't so bad. Special good for us able to get down here like we do. Wonder if all the hard work we did haulin' wuzn't good for us 'stead of sittin' at a desk like lots of guys do. I wouldn't like that, would you, Jed? 'Course I couldn't have had a desk job with my edjication. On second thought, or third, it might've been nice to have a pretty 'secretary' to look at now and then—and then and then. Prob'ly Em would've picked her out and she'd made sure she wuz homely as a bow-legged sculpin."

JED. "Guess you was better off lobsterin'. (Pause) Did John Fred tell you what a time he's been havin' tryin' to grow a lawn? He spread a lot of loam, did everything he'd read 'bout and then he sowed it real careful. Waited and waited to see it sprout. Even
went out at night with a flashlight sometimes lookin' for those little green spears. Nothin' happened. Then the other day he went into his shed and in the back there was these two sacks, one empty and the other hadn't been opened. Jumpin' Jiminy! On the empty one it said 'Kitty Litter'."

HARLEY. "You mean he'd planted Kitty Litter? Maybe he should wait a little longer to see if it might sprout coon kittens. They bring a good price out of state. (Reading the paper) Here's a story 'bout a war that could break out any time in a country I never heard of. I thought you and me went to that First World War to end all wars,--we wuz told. We didn't end nothin', did we? Those old 'uniforms'wuz the worst lookin' outfits I ever did see. Baggy pants, coats a couple sizes too big, and those 'putters' we had to wind 'round our legs! Never did see much good in those things. Fellers in the service now look so nice I might join up if I wuz young again, just so I could strut 'round lookin' like a Admiral or a General. 'Course bein' sorta short like I am it might take more'n a 'uniform' to make me look imposin'. You might look better'n me, bein'tall like you are."

JED. "Kids used to call me 'bean pole' and I got darn sick of that 'How's the weather up there?'. I used to say, 'It's rainin'!' and then I'd spit. They thought that was funny and it would shut 'em up. After while they stopped askin'. 'Fraid I'd hit them, I guess."

HARLEY. "You know 'bout this transcendentional medication. Wow! That would've curled my chin whiskers if I hadn't shaved 'em off this mornin'! Seems there's 'nough medicine without inventin' any more. People bein' medicine-d to death now."

JED. "That ain't medicine, its meditation. That means you set down twice every day and clear your mind and just think 'bout one word over and over. Some folks pay $125 to get a word from a guy from India called gurrer, guru, or somethin' like that."

HARLEY. "Must be a pretty fancy word. I could give some words for $1.25. How 'bout puttin' an ad in the Laundermat? 'Meditation words for sale, long, short, happy, sad'?"

JED. "You sure could give 'em some fancy ones. People need to rest their minds but not at $1.25 for that word. The guy calls it a 'mantera' or 'mantle', somethin' like that."

HARLEY. "Why couldn't you pick a word yourself for nothin'? I'd pick somethin' good to eat, like pie, puddin', chicken, steak, but no liver, never no liver!"

JED. "There's lots of queer doin's in this country now'days. Some guys settin' themselves up as Jesus and gettin' a lot of followers and some of 'em turn out to be crooks, gettin' their money and then disappearin'."

HARLEY. "Did you hear 'bout the pair that wuz goin' to take a bunch on a UFO to a better world?"

JED. "Yeh. How can people be so stupid! This world ain't so bad I'd want to take a chance on another."

HARLEY. "What if they found the other one didn't suit 'em? Better stay here and puddle through, as the feller sez."

JED. "Muddle's the word but puddle fits some, too. Lot of people bought land in Florida and got gypped. More crooks--and stupid people fallin' for 'em."

HARLEY. "I never had money 'nough to invest in land or anything else. Just as well I didn't. I might've been stupid, too, and let
myself be 'damboozled'. I did a foolish thing last summer, though. I let a quick talker sell me some books, one on flower arrangin' and another on French cookin'. Em blew up when she saw 'em. Said she could arrange flowers good enough without studyin' a book. 'I just put 'em into a vase and hope for the best', she sez. She looked through the French cookbook and said she'd be glad to cook some snails, a la somethin', if I'd catch some and if I'd guarantee to eat 'em but darned if she would. I sez darned if I would, either, so she give the book to someone. I don't know why I bought those books. Guess 'cause that girl wuz so pretty. I told Em I bought 'em from an old man. Thought I got myself out of that one but Annie come over and sez to Emma and me, 'Did you see that girl sellin' books? She wuz all fired up, painted and bleached, to catch men, includin' my John. He bought a book on flower arrangin' and one on French cookin'. French cookin'! All right, I sez to myself, I'd try some of it on that ninny John. Well, he tasted it and grabbed for his glass of water. Oh, my tongue, he was yellin'. What is this turrible mess? That's French cookin', I sez. Next day I looked for that cookbook and it wuz missin'. Looked everywhere and then I see where there'd been a little bonfire in the yard. I poked through it and sure 'nough there wuz a piece of that cookbook and on it wuz the recipe for that French mess, but it didn't say anything 'bout red pepper. That wuz my own idea! I hope it cured him for fallin' for a pretty face. He's old 'nough to know better, the old fool. I know my face ain't pretty, she sez, but they say wrinkles adds character. I wuz pretty 'nough once, she sez, to be named Miss Peaks Island.' When she left I asked Em what she meant. She said that wuz when she wuz three years old and there wuz only two girls in a baby contest. The other one wuz homelier than Annie. The rest wuz boys. Just between us I must admit the male of the species is better lookin'. Emma and me's been arguin' 'bout that for years. Anyway, she sez females are smarter. She's smart in her way but there's one thing females can't do."

JED. "What's that?"

HARLEY. Grow hair on their chests. I've read that's somethin' movie actors get paid extra for. If they have a good-sized bush on the front it's called sexy. You and me's got a pretty good crop on ours but I don't think anyone would call us sexy. What is sexy, anyway? Everybody's one sex or the other. What's so great 'bout that? Movie actors with donkey ears are supposed to be sexy, too."

JED. "I'd like to pick up a newspaper just once and not see that word sex. You'd think it had just been invented yesterday. It's been 'round so long it's ho-hum. 'Tis to me anyhow."

HARLEY. "You know mosquitoes has sex and it's the female does the bitin'. Wouldn't you know it! Female women can bite pretty well, too. (Pause) Forgot to tell you Em gave me'Hail Columbia' for tellin' her I bought those books from an old man."

JED. "There's a sayin', 'Be sure your sin will find you out'."

HARLEY. "Just say 'Emma' 'stead of that word 'sin'. Can't fool good old Emma."

JED. "There's another sayin', 'There's no harm in tryin'.""

HARLEY. "Once I did somethin' she never found out 'bout. 'Member that pretty leadin' lady at the theater years ago, Lilly Waters? One night I walked her home after the show and I asked her if I could the next night. She said 'yes' and I did the whole week."
The last night I shook hands with her, like I had every night, and
after I did, I up and kissed her right on the cheek, a real smacker.
The moon wuz full, shinin' on the water, and she smelled so sweet,
all talcum-ed up, I got carried away. That's when she told me she
wuz married. Imagine, me bein' with a married woman! In those
days you know how scand'rous that wuz!

JED. "You wasn't married then?"

HARLEY. "No, but Emma and me had an understandin'. That is, she
had give me to understand I wuz goin' to marry her."

JED. "You know what time it is? Liz will be havin' a conniption.
We'd better skedaddle."

HARLEY. "Our skedaddlin' days are so far back it's painful to
think of'em. Let's shove off!

THE NEXT DAY

JED. "Mornin', Harley. You're lookin' chipper."

HARLEY. "That's 'cause I'm feelin' chipper. Somethin' nice happened
yesterday,—I think. After I got home I thought I'd give Em a hand.
She does work hard, harder'n she needs to, seems to me. I got the
vacuum out and wuz doin' the livin'-room. She come in and started
that old phonograph and you know what the record happened to be!
'Let Me Call You Sweetheart'. Made me feel kinda good. Think she
might've put that on a purpose? She never wuz sentimental. Maybe
she's gettin' that way in her old age,—softenin' up or gettin'
soft in the head. (Pause) I shouldn't talk 'bout her the way I do.
She's bossy but I guess I'm the kind needs a boss."

JED. "You do talk pretty hard 'bout her. I think she put that
record on a purpose. You should've asked her to dance."

HARLEY. "I almost did but I thought that might spoil things. She
never did like my dancin' and neither did I. Those two left feet
wuz quite a 'handicat'. You wuz a good dancer. That time you wuz
almost named Mr. Peaks Island at the Pavilion you should've had it.
I always thought the guy got it wuz a friend of one of the judges.
Case of who you know, maybe. (Pause) I 'member the time I wuz
tryin' that new dance, the one-step, and I fell right down in the
middle of the place. I thought I wuz doin' real good but sudden-
like I wuz on my back lookin' up at Emma. For a second I thought
there might've been an earthquake turned the Pavilion upside down.
Em wuz awful embarrassed! Said I wuz bad 'nough on the two-step
and I had no business tryin' to cut down to a one-step."

JED. "I remember that. The manager thought you wuz drunk but I
told him you wasn't a drinkin' guy. I explained 'bout those two
left feet. He said 'bout half the couples on the floor had 'em."

HARLEY. "Glad I wuzn't the only one. Reminds me. You ever see a
bunch of young people dancin' on TV? Like lookin' into a plate of
worms! (Pause) If we put our minds to it we can prob'ly get
quite a lot of nothin' done today. The trouble with doin' nothin'
is you never know when you're through. (Reading the paper) Here's
an ad for a book 'bout how clams and lobsters multiply. I never
cared how they do 'long as they did when I wuz on their trail."

JED. "Speakin' of multiplyin', I hear that modern math is turnin'
out to be a failure. Now we're goin' onto the metric system to
get us all mixed up."

HARLEY. "I heerd 'bout that but I don't know what it means."

- 28 -
JED. "It means everything like pints and quarts and inches and feet and all that will be changed. Washin' ton changin' things."

HARLEY. "Too bad they wouldn't change their spendin' system.

(Reading the morning paper) Do you look at the funny's?"

JED. "Sometimes. I don't think they're very funny, though. Prob'ly 'cause I'm too old but we used to have some I wouldn't miss when I was growin' up,--Mutt and Jeff, the Katzenjammer Kids, Andy Gump. Now comics seem flat."

HARLEY. "We wuz pretty young when we wuz growin' up. Now'days kids are all grown up when they're growin' up. Know what I mean?"

JED. "I do. But kids miss a lot bein' growin' up. "

HARLEY. "Kids are livin' so fast and furious now'days they'll be all wore out,--senior citizens,--fore they're old 'nough to be that old. (Pause) People shouldn't retire. They should keep goin' as long as they can but 'course we wuz lobsterin' 'till... we wuz, you might say, past the prime of life. Over seventy's a mite old to be out on the briny. Emma used to say, 'Quit while you're still alive.' If I wuzn't alive I'd have to quit, wouldn't I? Don't make sense,--or does it? The whole fam'y kept after me. My boy Harry, he'd had a taste of it himself, said it wuz the hardest work he ever did. 'Twas time to quit. My daughter Kate would come down from Boston on vacation and just about raise the roof,--'Whatever are you thinkin' of, Father? This is ridic'rous at your age.' She can see Harvard from where she lives and she talks a little different from us. I'd listen, polite-like, but I'd think my own thoughts. Then in the fall I'd be pretty tired,--you know how tired,--and when I pulled my gear ashore I'd say to myself, 'This is the last'. But you know how that wuz, Jed. Come spring the old salt would rise and we'd think we could give it one more whirl. I'd go down to where old Mary Jane wuz hauled out and we'd have a little conference. She'd say, in a wheedle-y way, 'Son, you can make it once more,' and I'd agree to give it another whirl. But that last spring she didn't seem so sure and for the first time she said, 'Son, d'you think you can make it?'. I backed and filled some but I knew the time had come to 'throw in the sponge' as them sports writers sez. It hurt terrible to even sell my traps but I just couldn't sell my faithful old Mary Jane, so there she sets in the backyard, and will as long as I'm around. Might even be buried in her. Em could plant forget-me-nevers over me. Should've put that in my will, shouldn't I?"

JED. "Some folks might call you a sentimental old fool but not me, never me, 'cause I understand. I know there's a special little place in us old fools' hearts for every boat we've ever owned."

HARLEY. "From one old fool to another, you're right! (Pause) The woman that's been settin' on the other bench every mornin' ain't there. Never sez much but 'good mornin', does she? Seems to be listenin'. 'Spouse she's goin' to write a book 'bout us? We're characters, you know. If she does, let's send her a bill."

JED. We could sue her for wire-tappin' or somethin'. Think a good title for the book might be 'JED AND HARLEY DOWN EAST'? (Pause) Guess I'd better be gettin' back to my little grass shack, like in that old song 'bout Hawaii."

HARLEY. "I'll trot 'long with you. Same time tomorrow, Jed, Lord willin'?

- 29 -
ON GUARD

He sleeps in an island graveyard down
on the coast of Maine,
Seemingly oblivious to wind and snow and rain,
But I feel he hears the sea gulls cry and the
strident voices of ships passing by;
And when the fog comes rolling in or a storm
besets the shore,
I feel he goes into action, as he did in
days of yore;
He probably checks the whistle, the horn,
the bell, the light,
To be sure as anyone could be that every­
thing's working right;
For our lighthouse keepers were faithful,
their vigil never cease,
And as long as men go down to the sea, they
could not "rest in peace";
So here's to those gallant gentlemen,
whose loyalty never ends,
They were known for many a year as the
mariners' best friends.

(Inspired by the grave of Capt. John A. Shaw,
first keeper of Matinicus Light, appointed by
John Quincy Adams, 1831, and buried in the
Brackett Cemetery on Peaks Island, Maine).

FULL CIRCLE

The White Cliffs of Dover, the Isle of Capri,
The Pyramids of Egypt, the beach at Waikiki,
The Eiffel Tower in Paris, those old castles
in Spain,
To see all these I'd have to leave my island
home in Maine;
And times I've thought I'd take a trip,—
around the world I'd go,
But if I should obey the urge there's one
thing that I know,
I'd come back to my island and be content
to stay,
For I'm sure there couldn't be a spot to
equal Casco Bay!

K. S.
ISLAND FOG

Wispy fog and the night drifting in
from the sea
Found me walking the beach road alone;
As the mist and the dark slowly
circled 'round me,
Distant foghorns began their low moan.

Then I saw the far lines of the
mainland grow dim;
Next, the breakwater guarding
the shore;
And the buoy on the reef softly
belling its hymn
Harmonized with the surf's muffled roar.

Phantom seabirds 'planed over the
blotted-out Bay,
Their shrill cries sounding
muted and thin;
And the world and its cares and my
wearying day,
All were lost in that fog drifting in!

THE GULLS

Standing sentinels on rotting
waterfront piles,
Beady-eyed, motionless, like
stuffed birds,
The gulls!

Suddenly off with raucous cries to
swoop down on floating goodies;
Scavengers, garbage collectors,
"Down the hatch" with a gulp or two,
Then climbing high to sail the wind
And back to perch on the piles.

At evening winging their leisurely
way to the outer islands to roost
and rest 'til another dawn;
What would the harbor be without them,
beautiful boon that they are?
The gulls!

K. S.
LET ME GO BACK

"Oh, let me laugh a while, I've mickle time to grieve";*
Let me once again in Saint Nicholas believe,
And in the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny;
Let me laugh at things that really aren't that funny;
Let me be young again for just a little while;
This life we live today is such a "crooked mile";
Let me walk childhood's way with no care nor sorrow;
It would help me to face life much better tomorrow.

*Scotch saying

GET SET

No man goes through life without leaving a mark;
Some stay on the ground, some soar like a lark;
But whatever your station, whatever your grade,
You've a very good chance for a mark that won't fade;
So get set on a target and set your sights high;
Don't leave all the glory to some other guy;
But if you don't make it, you still can take pride
In the comforting thought that at least you had tried.

TAKE TIME

If we could only capture the peace of a quiet day,
Or the joy in the happy laughter of children at their play,
And package it compactly for sale in the marts of trade,
In a little less than jig time, a fortune could be made;
But since this isn't possible, let each of us try to slow
And get some joy from "Little Things" as through Life's
Maze we go.

HOW WOULD I KNOW?

I'm often in error but never in doubt
And it makes no difference what it's about;
From expressing opinions I never shrink
For if I don't, I won't know what I think!

K. S.
ISLAND HAVEN

I like to think that our island,
    tired of the world and its way,
Is a portion of the mainland which
    stole away into the Bay,
To find a bit of quiet and a
    little peace of mind,
And to get away completely from
    the city's merciless grind;
I like to think it's happy it
    moved itself out here,
For it's made a peaceful haven for
    man for many a year;
A place where he can take his ease
    and let his nerves unwind;
The Paradise he thought was lost
    is here for him to find.

ISLAND SLAVE

Yesterday was a bright blue day with
    not a cloud in sight,
And the Bay was a mirror, so smooth
    it was and everything seemed
    so right;
But today the wind through the pines
    is a-sighing,
And the surf!--white horses, their
    manes a-flying;
Tomorrow the fog may come drifting in,
    Which means the foghorn's eerie din;
An island has moods,—first a smile,
    then a tear,
But I wouldn't live anywhere else
    but here,
For even though it may misbehave,
    Its magic has made me its willing slave!

TIDES

Time's Tides come in and Time's Tides go out
And we watch and wonder what it's all about;
They wash out our prints on Time's shore,
As they have of those who have gone before;
But all we can do as on Life's Way we go
Is to hope one small print will be left—to show.
Time's Tides Go In and Out.

K. S.
MY HOME IN MAINE

I came to a fork in the Road of Life and
I said to myself, said I,
"Shall I take the road which leads to the
sea or the city which lies close by?";
Well, I thought a bit and I flipped a coin
and the coin came up a head,
So I shunned the road to the city close by
and I took the sea road instead;
And I tell you, sir, I've no regrets, for
this peaceful haven I found,
And I couldn't have turned up a better spot
if I'd searched the world around;
If I'd traveled to England, to France, to
Wales, to Scotland or to Spain,
I'm sure I wouldn't have found a place
to equal the Coast of Maine;
So take the road to the city, if Fortune
would find,
But take the road that leads to the sea
if you'd rather have Peace of Mind.

THE BEAUTIFUL SEA

The cruel sea, the killer sea,
The treacherous, ever-changing sea;
Sometimes it's calm as a sheet of glass
And sometimes as mean as a bad-
tempered lass;
And think of the things it has done
that are tragic!
Yet it keeps on working its age-old magic;
And no matter how much it misbehaves
Sea-lovers are ever its willing slaves.
The cruel...beautiful...sea!

A WISH FOR YOU

"May the road rise with you,--
May the wind be always at your back";#
"May the Lord take to you and the Devil
never push you off the track;
And furthermore I'll add,--May fair
be your weather,
And your cares as light as a humming-
bird's feather!

#Irish wishes

K. S.
TIME WAS

Time was when there was Time;
When Time was an old man dozing by the fire,
His good wife sewing or knitting to "pass the time";
Neighbors dropping by to sit for a while;
Children reading books, doing the chores, being taught to "keep house",
Getting a new dress or suit which must "be taken care of";
A penny's worth of candy, a church social sponsored by the "Dorcas Society";
A meeting of "Christian Endeavor", a square dance at the Grange Hall;
Time was a leisurely meal, at a table no less, with kinfolk and friends always welcome;
An invitation to "come again" or "come and spend the day";
There was even talk of "killing time", times when there was too much of it;
Time today is a will-'o-the-wisp, a whisper, a swish, and it is gone;
The clock registers the seconds, minutes and hours; the calendar the days, weeks, months and years,
But Time is "no time", no time for simple pleasures, no time to get to know our neighbors, no time for good books, good conversation, for cooking a good meal;
For writing to relatives and friends; no time for things worthwhile;
Time is a gypsy, traveling, traveling, and the web of our lives keeps unraveling.

Katherine Stewart